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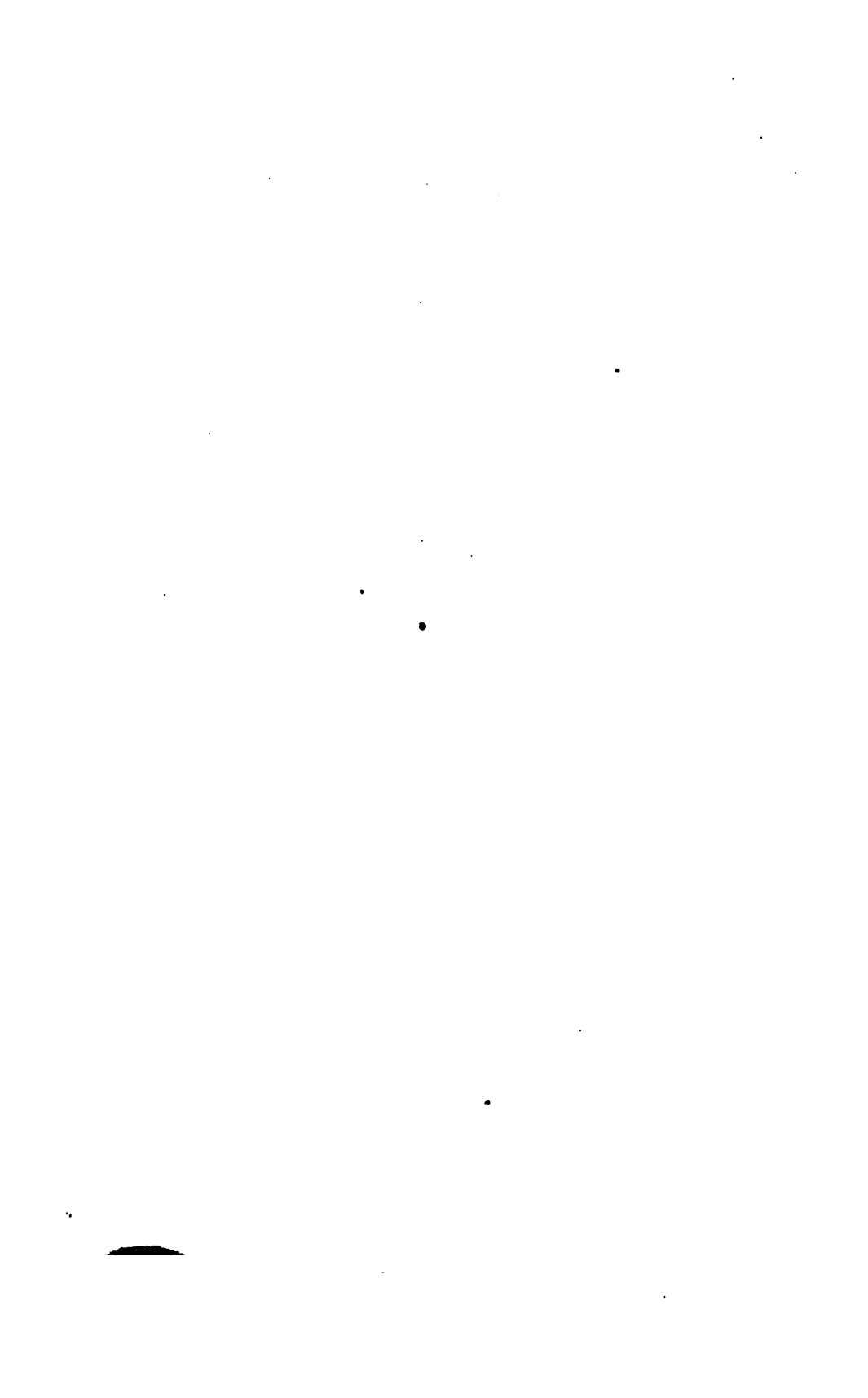


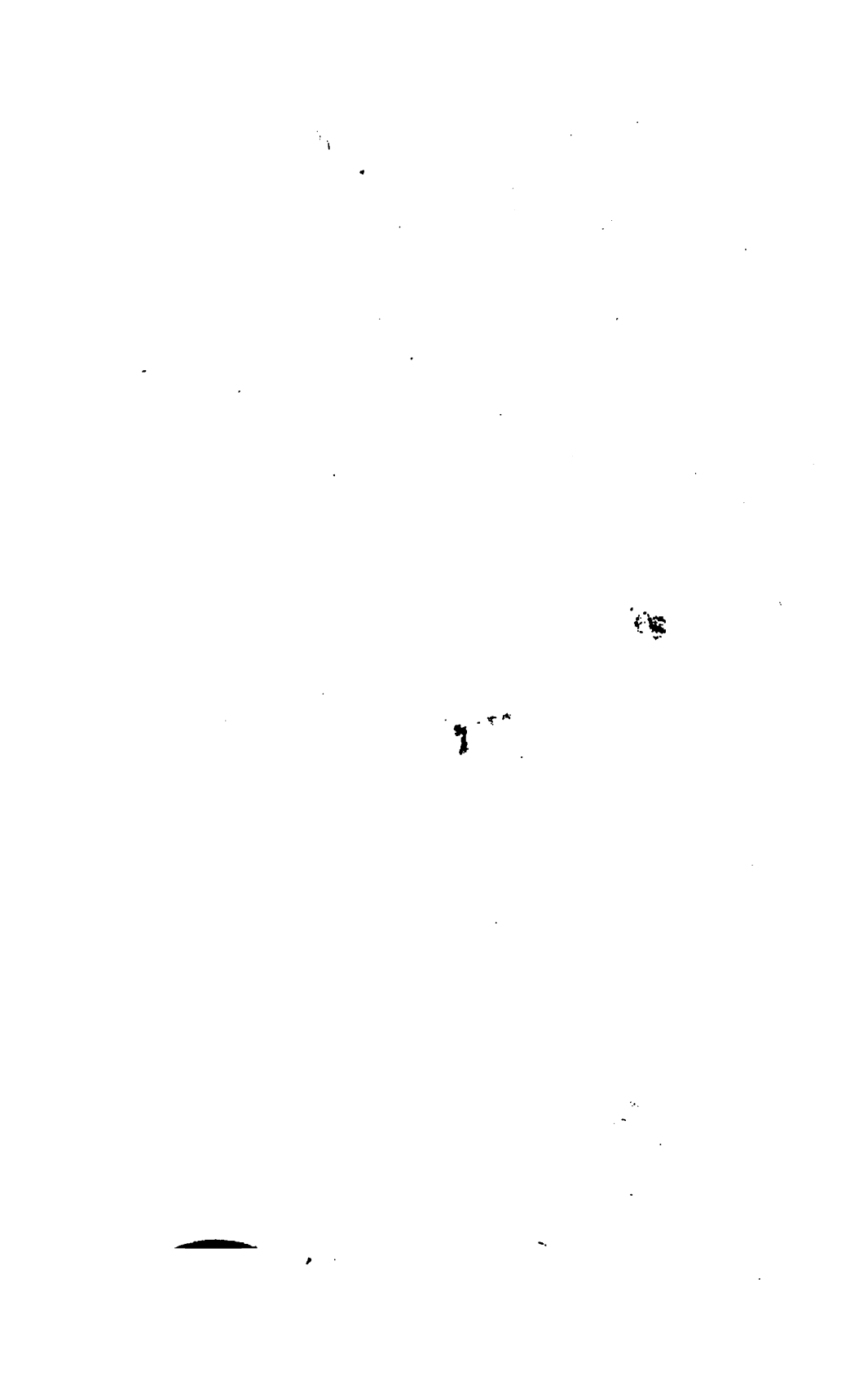
Miss Keane

from the suburban

Washington

January 1839.





B A N C O ;

OR,

THE TENANT OF THE SPRI

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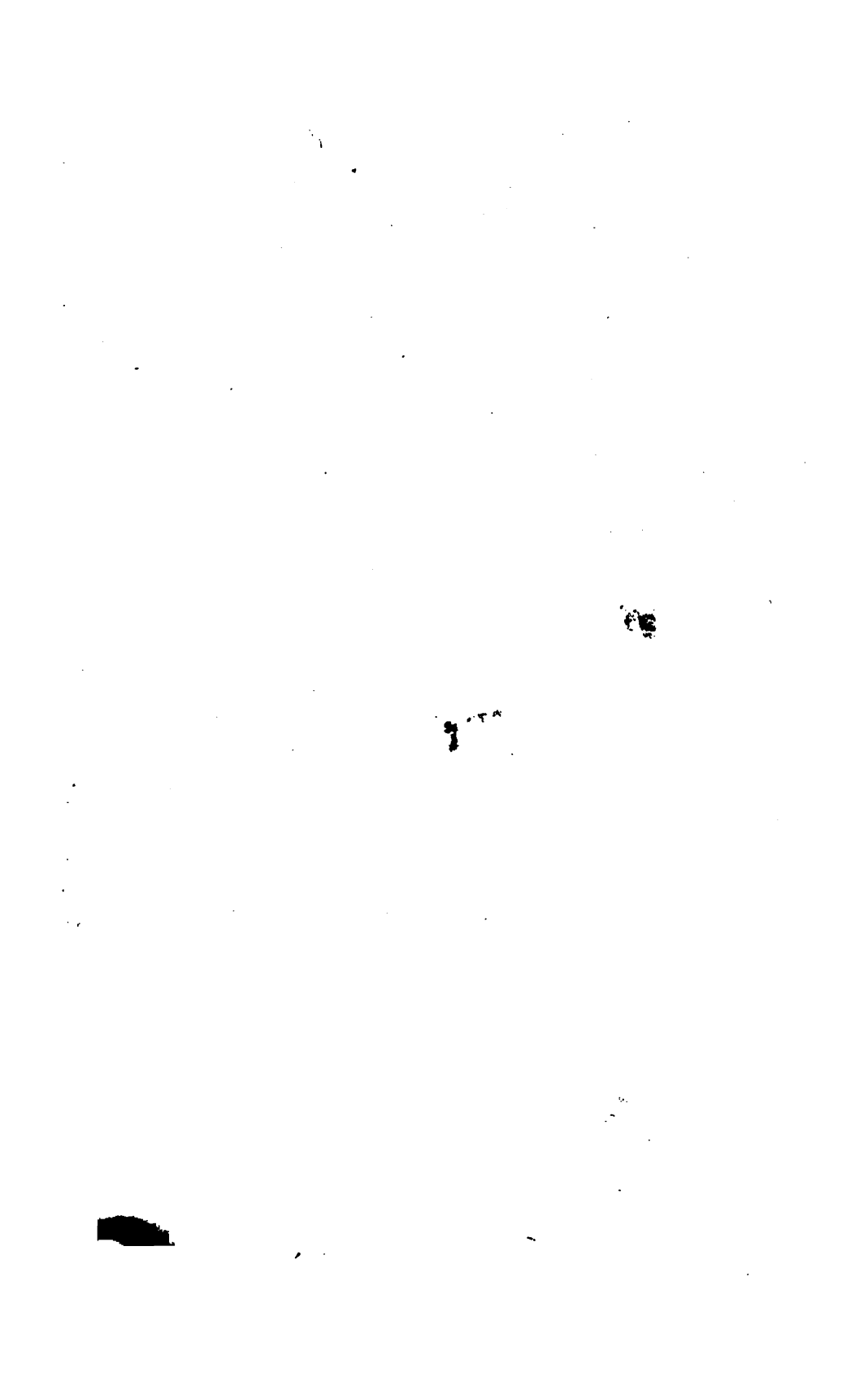
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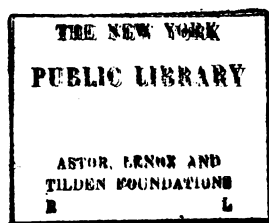
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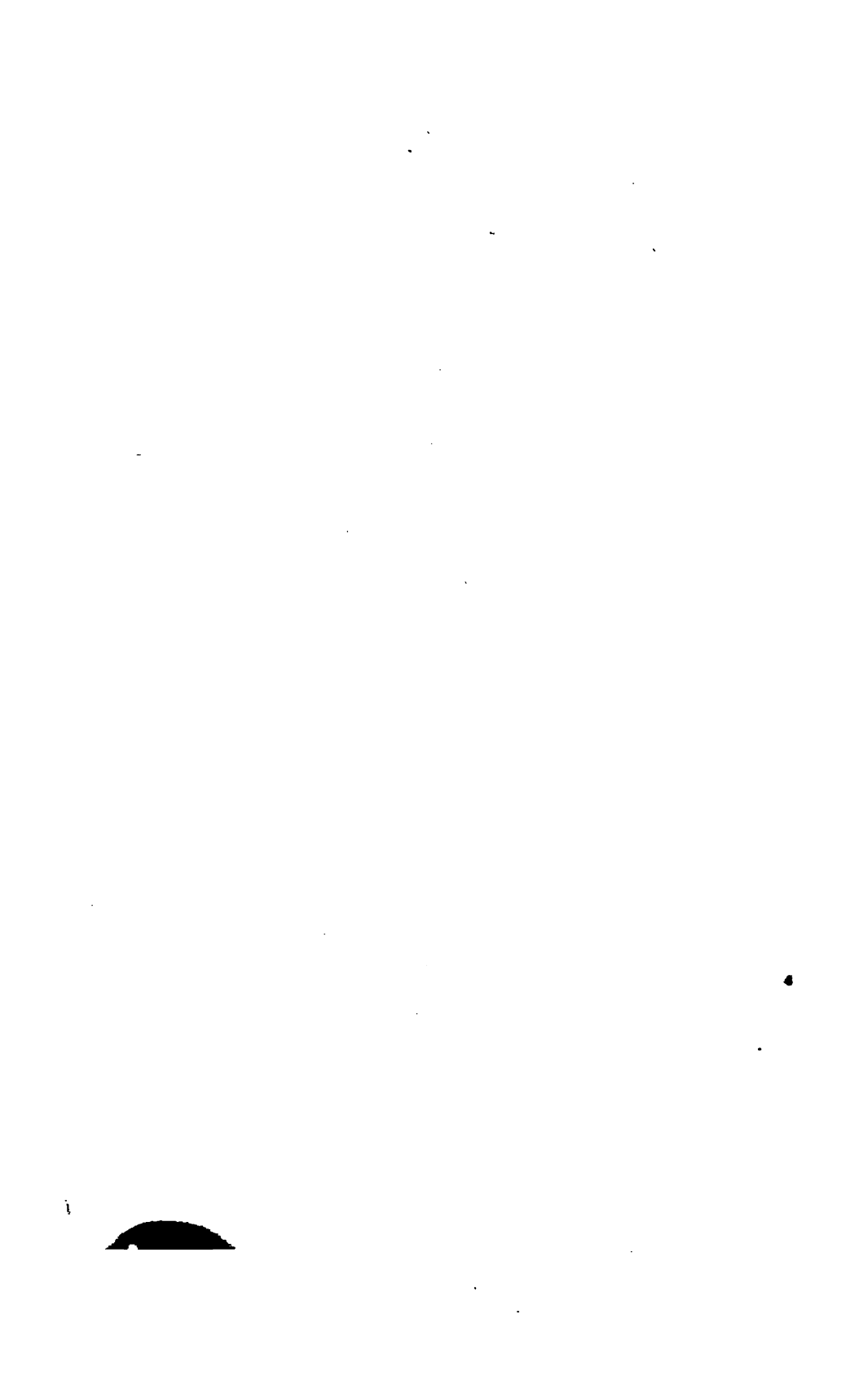


Seven Gables Feb. 17, 1953

TO THE
HON. WILLIAM COST JOHNSON,
OF MARYLAND,

This Poem
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

THE following Poem was written among valleys of the Greenbriar mountains, in West during the summer season, when the various springs of that vicinity, so famous throughout for their medicinal and refreshing qualities, thousands of persons, who come there as Pilgrims to the shrine of Hygeia! The White Sulphur is celebrated, and it is in that romantic neighbourhood that the scenes of this Poem are supposed to be enacted since.



B A N C O.


P A R T I.

MANY summers have pass'd away
In merry mirth and roundelay ;
And springs and autumns, closing on
The season's change, have come and g
And countless days, in rapid flight,
Have waned away their morning light,
In that fair vale they call the Bless'd,
Where smiling Nature loves to rest—

Where all her witching beauties reign
In glory o'er the bright domain ;
And where she leads on every stream,
The ripples dance in playful beam ;
Where gushing streams of silver lave
The bending trees, whose tresses wave
In rich and fragrant verdure bright,
Of spreading leaves, which shade the light
Of midday suns—while sparkling rills
Leap o'er the thousand varied hills ;
Which, circling round the lovely scene,
With diadems of freshest green,
O'erlook the shining plains beneath,
Of golden fruits and blooming heath.

It was a land where all was bright—

It seem'd as nothing there could fade :
So full of promise and delight,
By angels or by magic made.



BANCO.

The woods and vales, and rocks among
With richest jewelry were hung,
Of crystal gems of ev'ry hue,
All moulded from the ev'ning dew.
The flowers were of fairest bloom,
And ev'ry breeze that wanton'd by
Was freighted with a soft perfume,
More fragrant than from Araby.

A limpid lake, whose silent stream
Was quiet as an infant's dream,
Flow'd by, unruffled in its bed,
To other vales; but where it led
None ever knew, and those who tried
To find its source, came back no more
To tell their tale—they may have died,
Or landed on some distant shore.

Who dwells within this Paradise ?

Where are the spirits of the land,
Who warm beneath its summer skies ?—
What Queen or Beauty has command ?

No sound is ever waken'd there
Save by the carols in the air,
Of singing birds on gayest wing ;
And none can see an earthly thing.
No human voice is heard—no trace
Is seen of all the mortal race,
If such they were within this vale—
Of whom tradition has the tale.

For ages long, in faded time,
There lived, within this sunny clime,
A fairer race than ever earth
Or fairy realm has given birth.

BANCO.

In days whose ever-constant wing
Of pleasure, if it ever changed,
But varied new delights to bring,
In joys they lightly, freely, ranged—
Without a care to mar with strife
One moment of their rosy life.

But like the world, though nothing less
Than bliss was theirs—and pleasure t
They wearied of the happiness,
And look'd abroad for something new

The legend runs—it was their creed—
Some magic spell their souls confined
And from the charm they would be free
If in the valley they could find
The stream of life—whose crystal flow
Was brighter than the silver's glow :

Whose pearly drops of liquid white
Would give to pleasure fresh delight ;
Whose virtues fairy ban would sever,
And all who drank would live for ever.


P A R T I I.

It was a soft and gentle night—
The moon was streaming forth her light
And so resplendent in her ray,
It seem'd as if it still were day.

The air was still—no sound was heard,
Save of the hum of hourie bird,
Returning late on restless wing,
From some feathery gathering ;
And now and then the whirling by
Of the insect bee, or fire-fly.

When, on a high and greenwood steep,
Which overhung a ravine deep—
So dark and dreár that lonely dell,
It had the name of Witches' Well—
A female form, serenely bright,
Was seen within the pale beam light,
In gesture wild, and stranger mood,
And sighing in the solitude.
Whate'er she were, of earth or air,
Her features seem'd divinely fair.
With tresses made of golden strings,
 With here and there an azure one ;
And head-dress form'd of blue-birds' wings,
 She look'd some seraph of the sun.

She sleeps—she dreams—or dreaming seems :
What magic light about her streams !
It plays in circles round her brow,
And there, in fire, it settles now.



BANCO.

A voice as from the "Witches' Well,"
In tones of wild unearthly strain,
Then on her ear thus deeply fell ;
And thrice it sounded o'er again :

"Light of the Sylphs ! we've heard thy
It came upon the rainbow high ;
We've tried it with the sacred dew,
And find thy wish is pure and true.

"But all the sighs that ever fell
From Sylph, or Maid, or Eastern gale
If purer than the green-fern bell,
Would nothing now thy wish avail.

"Thy kindred from the land have gone,
In fruitless hope and endless toil ;
For anxious years they wander'd on,
And now are wasted from the soil.

“ They all went forth to seek the stream—
Whose vision often in thy dream,
In all its fancy-colour’d light,
Has broke upon thy raptured sight.
Some went up by the silent lake,
And some went round the mountain’s side ;
Through dreary wild, and forest brake ;
But none came back—they all have died.

“ Many had gain’d the wish’d-for site ;
But faint with terror and affright,
All, one by one, they perish’d there—
And left thee here—sole Bride of Air !

“ It was decreed—it was their doom—
They must have faded soon or late :
(The fruits and trees no more will bloom
Within the vale for them :) for Fate

BANCO.

Had number'd every happy day,
That wing'd their moments here away.

“ One measure of the fabled stream
Would soon have broke their happy dr
Of sweet existence, and the cares
And strifes of mortals had been theirs ;
But none have quaff'd the stream, whil
Who sought it went within its reach.

“ If thou would'st seek, and thou would
Still more of all this tale of wo ;
And knowing all, still sigh to gain
The fount, thy wish will not be vain.

“ 'Tis written—‘ In the cycle's wane,
The last of all the Sylph's shall gain
The sacred wand, and break the spell
That binds the waters in the dell.’

“The monster **Banco** keeps the spring ;
He walks around a magic ring,
Where there within the waters wait
To break from out their restless state.
A savage wolf—his horrid yell
Wakes up the mountains of the dell.
Bound by a spell, he cannot move,
Nor from within the circle rove.
The untold myriads of thy race !
Who ventured all within that space,
Have been for him his sole repast—
The fairest were devour’d the last.

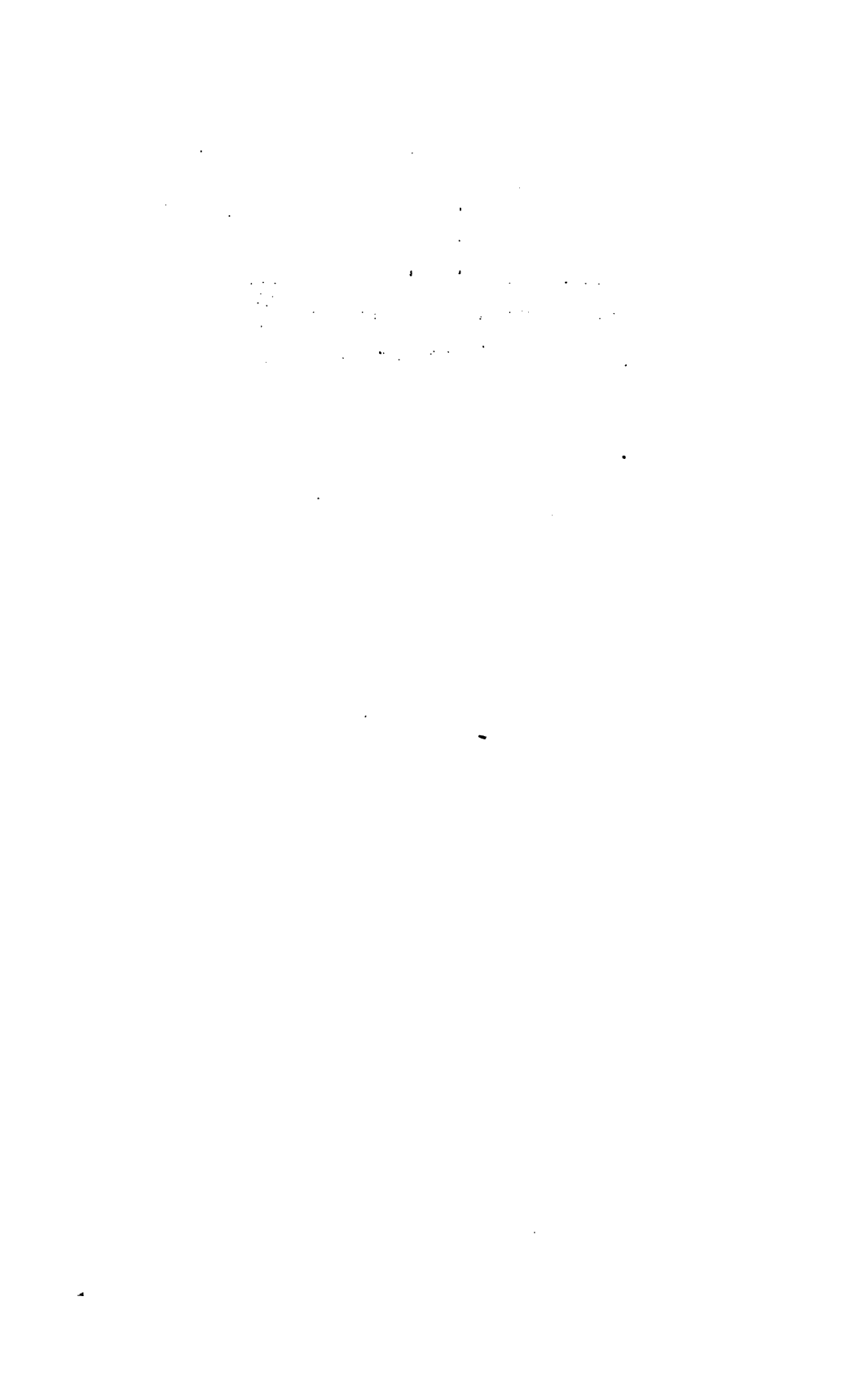
“And **Banco** sleeps but once a year—
His sleeping time is drawing near ;
And now he famishes for food,
For none have broke his solitude
For three whole days—and he longs for more
Of his fav’rite Sylphs, and hungers sore.

“If thou wilt seek, now, Sylph, awake,
And haste and speed thee up the lake;
A skiff, made of the light yew tree,
Is waiting there to carry thee
With the speed of light through elfin dells,
To the fabled fount where Banco dwells.”

The Sylph awakes—the voice is gone—

Was it a fairy, elf, or sprite,
Who thus her fate had hurried on?

The Sylph awakes—but not in fright,
For she was glad: and it pleased her so
That the time had come when she could go
To that ^{valley} ~~valley~~ ^{far}, which she doubted not,
Was of all the world, the sweetest spot.



PART III.

THE moon is shining lovely still—
Her beams are playing on each rill :
She's sleeping quiet on the lake,
And peeping through each wood and b


A shadow on the lake is seen,
Skimming on as the heron flies ;
And where a ripple ne'er had been,
The curling waves now fast arise.

The shadow is the yew-tree skiff,
 Bearing along the Sylph so fast,
That every highland rock and cliff,
 Like lightning streaking by, is pass'd.

She passes by the dead-wood brake,
Where spectre trees, thrown o'er the lake,
Appear, when shaken in the storm,
Like skeletons of human form.

She passes by the fern sward heath—
High up the lake, and there, beneath
The maple trees, in silver sheen,
The elfs are dancing on the green ;
And as she speeds for miles along,
She faintly hears their notes of song.

Come, dance around this green yew-tree;
And let the dance go merrily ;



The Sylphs are wasting from the lea,—
And morning's dawn no Sylph will see.

The bark has stopp'd—with lithesome leap,
The Sylph is on the highest steep ;
And there, bewilder'd with amaze,
She pauses for awhile to gaze.

And Banco sleeps—he little dreams
How delicate a Sylph is near ;
He's dreaming fast of other streams ;
He'd rather watch, than famish here.

The Sylph has gain'd the inmost ring,
And there beholds the glist'ning spring,
The stream of life, at sparkling play—
And oozing in its wonted way,
Beneath the clear transparent vase,
That holds it, at the mountain's base.

With eager joy her willing hand
Has seized the white and mystic wand,
And with a light and gentle stroke,
The spell that bound the waters broke.

There comes no stream so soft and bright,
Whose promise made the Sylphs delight ;
But, breaking forth with startling roar,
And rushing down the mountain's side,
In torrents now the waters pour,
And flood the valley far and wide.

Where's Banco ? sleeping ?—No ! the sound
Has freed his spell—and with one bound
Of desperate strength, he clears the steep ;
While, closing on, the waters sweep
In ocean streams o'er lake and vale ;
When through the air is heard a wail—

BANCO.

A howling wail—and fearful cry—
While rolling thunders break the sky.

And Banco seeks the mountain's brow,
(The monster wolf is swimming now,)
He's failing fast—his strength is gone—
And by the tide he's carried on.


The wolf has reach'd the summit hill,
He looks around : before his eyes,
Upon the waters, gaining still,
A thousand flitting spectres rise ;
And there his troubled vision sees
A murder'd Sylph, with torch on high,
On every wave ; which fast the breeze
Is urging on, and bringing by.

The wolf is stricken with despair—
He crouches like a monk at prayer ;

And while the waters round him swell,
Sends forth on high his horrid yell.

But, impious wolf! the waters roll
In swelling surges o'er his head,
And Banco with his troubled soul
Now yells among the restless dead.

Long years have pass'd—a merry ring
Is ever seen around that spring,
Of mortals; length'ning out their dream
Of life's enchantment at the stream—
That stream of life, whose crystal flow
Is brighter than the silver's glow.




From every clime—from far and near—
They come to pay their homage here.

Old Age, he comes—his gladden'd eye
Anew with lustre sparkles high ;
And while he quaffs, his heart again
Goes back to youth—forgets his pain.

And Beauty comes, with face so bright !
She drinks, and smiles with new delight ;
And cheeks that have grown brown with care,
The pearly stream makes wondrous fair.

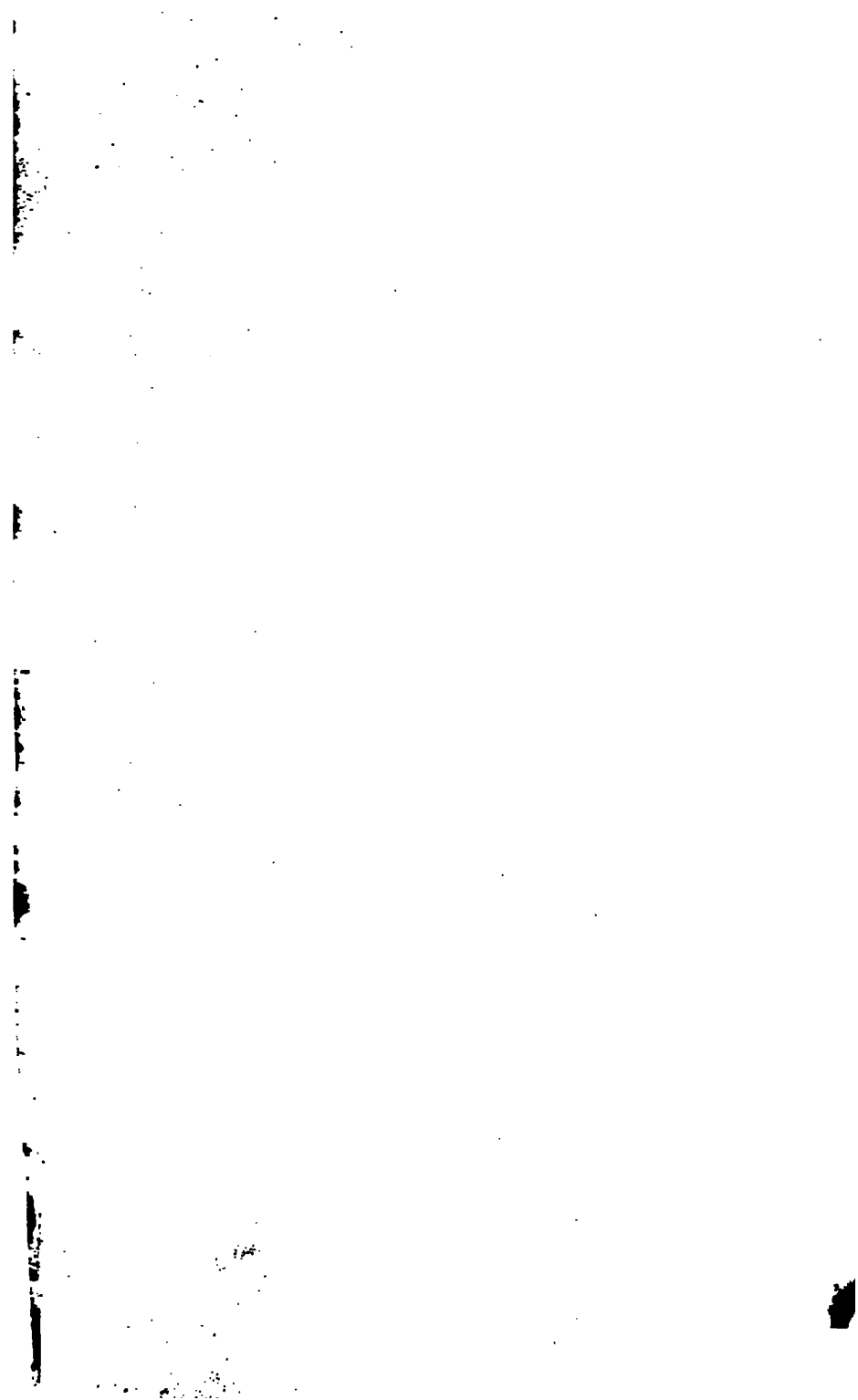
And oft a tear is there let fall
For that fair Sylph who perill'd all ;
Who gave a life made up of bliss
To freshen ours with joys like this.



And then again—remember'd still—
Where Banco sleeps is now WOLF HILL.

And many a boy, by the mountain's side,
There tells the tale how the old wolf died.

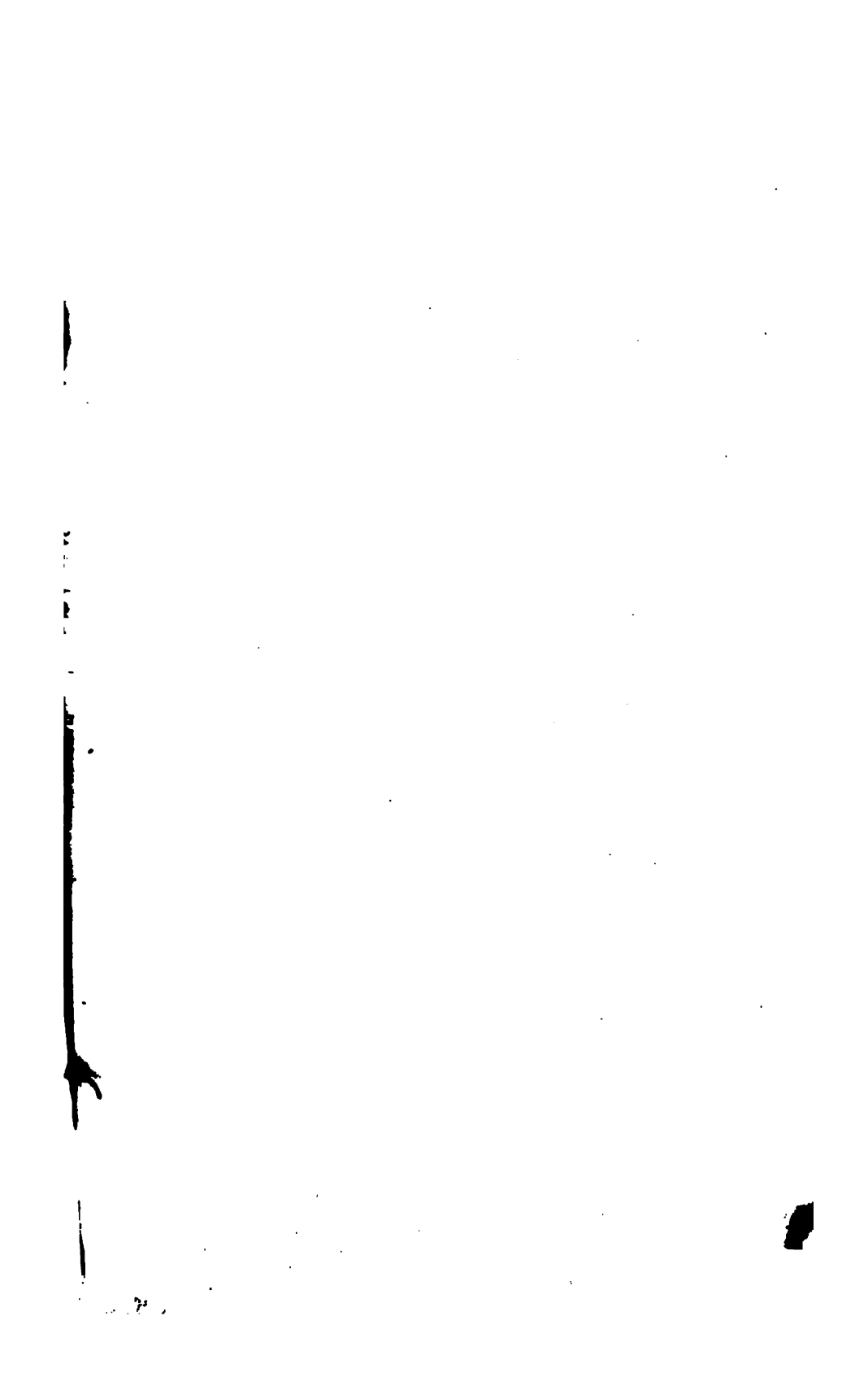
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS,
August, 1838.









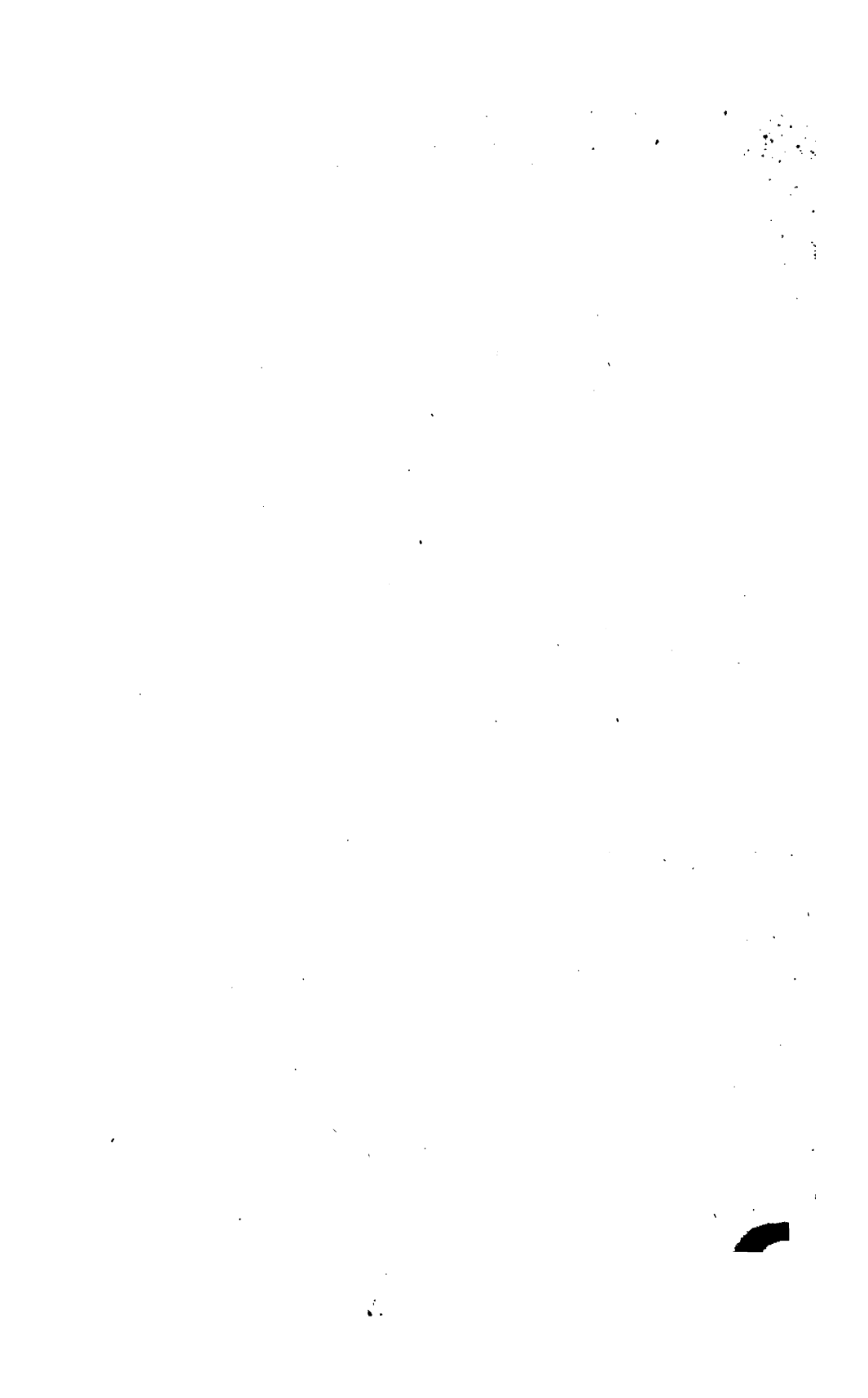


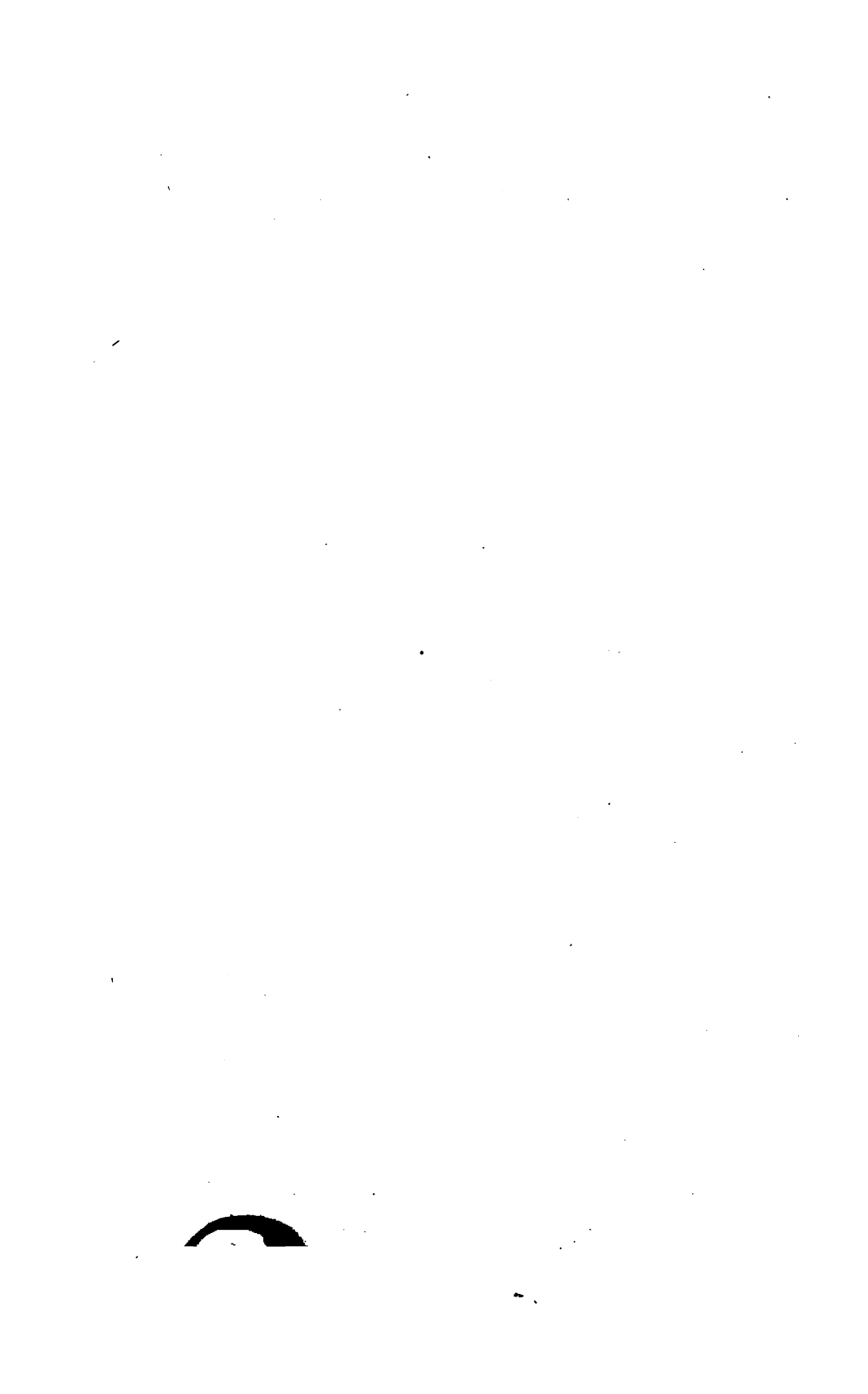


















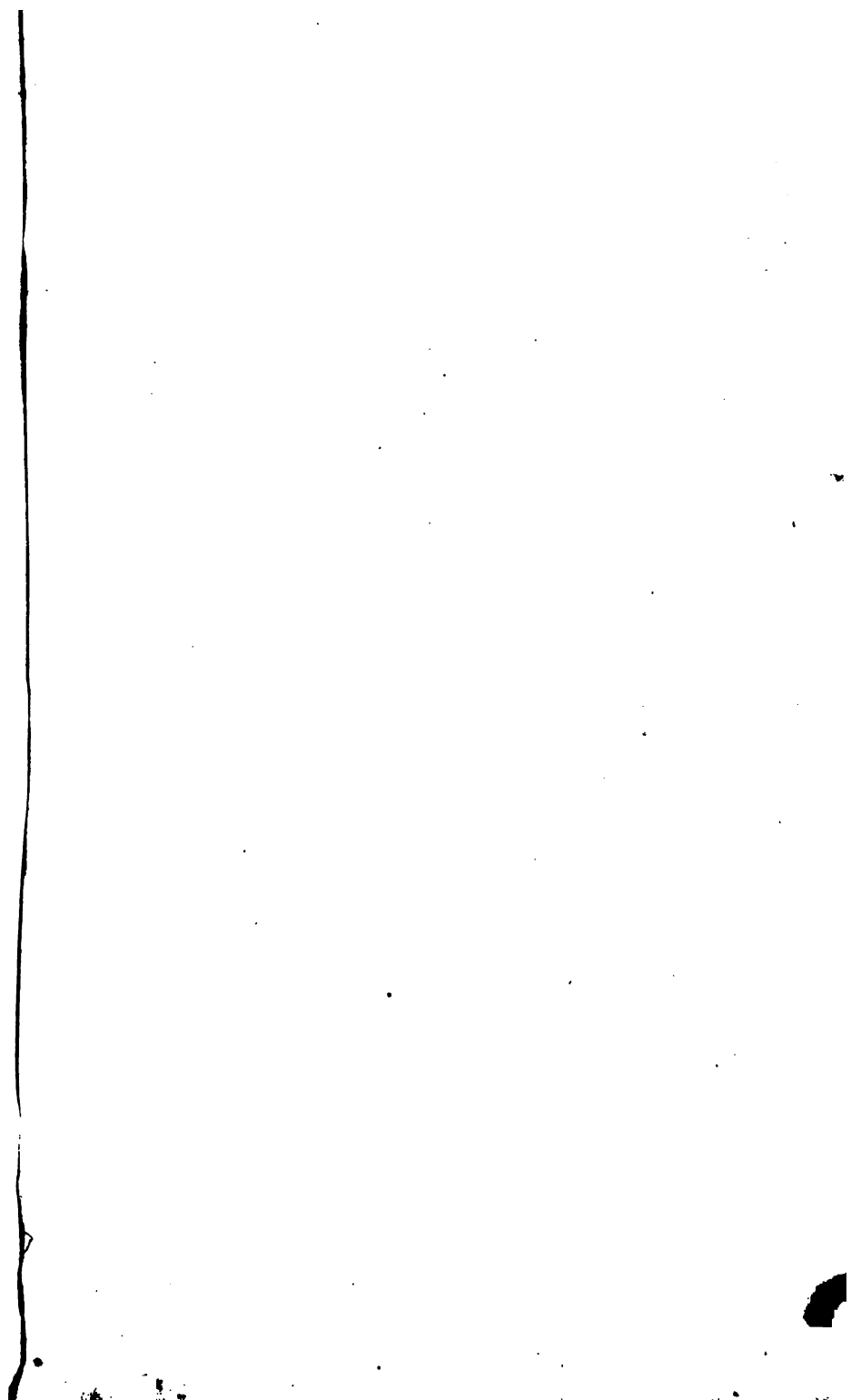


























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